

minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Thursday, 20th May 2004 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Andy Freeman (Chair)
V H Dobson (Vice-Chair)

A	John Bell		J T A Napier
A	Kenneth Bullivant	A	Mrs Nellie Smedley
A	W J Clarke		Mrs S Smedley
	Yvonne Davidson		P Tsimbirdis
A	Stan Heptinstall MBE	A	Keith Walker
A	Richard Jackson		

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo
“ Tom Pettingell
“ Andrew Stewart

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the County Council on 6th May 2004 of Councillor Andy Freeman as Chair and Councillor Vincent Dobson as Vice-Chair of the Select Committee was noted.

MEMBERSHIP

No changes to the Membership of the Select Committee were reported.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 20th May 2004 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor John Bell
“ Stan Heptinstall

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

HIGHWAYS AGENCY PRESENTATION

Ivan Beavis and Peter Craddock from the Highways Agency gave a short presentation to up-date the Committee on developments since they had attended in October 2003. He emphasised improvements in communication, by way of the newsletter for stakeholders, a database of councillors, increased dialogue with A M Scott, and attendance at public meetings. In reply to a question from Councillor Freeman, Mr Beavis explained that plans for the Agency to take over Police responsibilities in relation to congestion had been launched in April, with the East Midlands Region due to be involved in 2005. He indicated that the Traffic Management Bill was still in Parliament, and officers were shadowing the Police in preparation for their new role. He stated that the pilot would be evaluated, and he expected results to be shared with local authorities.

Councillor Davidson asked about widening of the M1. Mr Beavis replied that this was now back in the targeted programme in two phases; the first possibly starting in 2006 to widen within existing land boundaries, and a second phase requiring land acquisition. He explained that Junction 29A was a separate scheme being promoted by Derbyshire County Council. Councillor Brandon-Bravo stressed the importance of clear signing at junctions. In reply to comments from members about encouraging freight by rail, Mr Beavis indicated that all motorway widening projects were the result of multi-modal studies. Steve Calvert, Acting Assistant Director (Environmental Planning) stated that the A52 multi-modal study had been completed a month previously, with consultation currently being carried out by the Regional Assembly. He added that no new multi-modal studies were proposed, only route management studies, which had a more limited scope.

Councillor Stella Smedley asked whether the Agency newsletter should have a wider audience. Mr Beavis agreed, pointing out the newsletter was a local initiative. He assured members that Agency officers were looking at such

issues. He pointed out that information about the Agency was available on its website, but members felt that this required a proactive approach from enquirers. Jas Hundal, Deputy Director of Environment, offered to help the Agency in its communications with councillors.

Councillor Freeman thanked Mr Beavis and Mr Craddock for their presentation and answering questions.

FLUVIAL TRENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report on the Environment Agency's Fluvial Trent Strategy, which contained their proposals for tackling flooding on the Trent from Stoke-on-Trent to below Newark. The report contained a draft of the County Council's response to the Agency's consultation about the strategy, which was to be discussed at Cabinet on 26 May.

Roy Ladhams from the Environment Agency gave a presentation on the Fluvial Trent Strategy. He circulated copies of the summary report, and explained how the full report was available. He outlined how the strategy had been prepared and how options had been assessed using criteria set by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). He identified the locations where "100 year protection" (ie protection against flooding likely to occur once every 100 years), would produce the greatest benefits compared with costs. Overall, he stated that the strategy would provide such benefits as better flood warning services, 100 year protection for some areas, better information to property owners about levels of flood risk, detailed surveys of flood defences, and improved responses during times of flooding.

Mr Ladhams then answered questions from members. In reply to questions from Councillor Pettengell, he said that flooding of the River Erewash was seen as having a low impact compared with the volumes of water involved in flooding by the Trent, and that the measures of economic cost had been defined by Defra and excluded insurance.

Councillor Stella Smedley supported the concept of SUDS, where porous surfaces and landscaping were used to minimise the amount of run-off. She felt it should be encouraged in new developments, but was aware that the County Council and Severn Trent Water did not always respond positively. She believed a change of attitude was needed. Mr Ladhams commented that Severn Trent were keen to trial the concept before it became widespread.

Councillor Freeman asked about links between the Agency and the insurance industry. Mr Ladhams explained that the Agency did work with the industry, and that insurers usually accepted the Agency's estimates of flood risk.

Councillor Brandon Bravo drew attention to the meeting held on 19 May in Lowdham, which had been chaired by Councillor Stewart and attended by a range of parish, district and county council representatives. Councillor Freeman circulated the six part resolution which had been agreed by that meeting, and Councillor Brandon Bravo suggested that the resolution be brought to Cabinet's attention when it considered this matter. Councillor

Freeman viewed the second and third resolutions as being closest to the County Council's remit, and worthy of support, whereas the other resolutions he saw as being more pertinent to other organisations.

Councillor Stewart explained that detailed surveys of properties in flood risk areas needed to continue. Mr Ladhams indicated that this task was due to be completed in all villages within two months. Councillor Pettengell asked how impact on people was measured. Mr Ladhams replied that this was complex, but he offered to provide details.

Councillor Freeman indicated that he and Councillor Dobson would convey the Select Committee's views to Cabinet on 26 May. They would ask Cabinet to take into consideration the resolutions from the meeting in Lowdham on 19 May, particularly the second and third resolutions, and encourage Cabinet to seek greater co-operation within the County Council for SUDS initiatives. He thanked the Environment Agency's representatives for their contribution.

REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, MARCH-APRIL 2004

Members drew particular attention the Street Lighting Service Improvement Plan. Malvin Trigg, Assistant Director (Transportation) explained about on-going negotiations with the power companies, which were now a National issue, being pursued with the regulator. It was agreed that there should be a report on the Street Lighting Service to the next meeting of the Committee.

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES, MARCH-APRIL 2004

Members expressed disappointment about the performance in Direct Services. Mr Hundal up-dated the picture for the year end. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member for Resources should be invited to the Committee to enable further scrutiny of the Building Cleaning and Landscape Services.

MINERALS LOCAL PLAN

Mr Calvert circulated a revised copy of the work plan. In reply to a question from Councillor Freeman, Mr Calvert stated that the County Council was responsible for the cost of the public enquiry, although it did receive some Government grant for such purposes. It was agreed to note the report.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's work programme was noted. Members commented in general about the value of co-ordination in scrutiny, and of a common format for committee's work programmes.

WASTE STRATEGY UP-DATE

Malvin Trigg introduced the report. Councillor Stella Smedley emphasised the

importance of schools being involved. Mr Trigg explained that a full-time officer worked with schools to encourage recycling. Councillor Freeman asked whether all District Councils would meet their targets in 2005/06. Mr Trigg indicated that performance was weakest in Gedling, and the failure by any District to meet stretch targets would threaten the County Council's receipt of the reward grant. It was agreed to note the report.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

CHAIR

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